



Manifesto for the 2025 Falkland Islands General Election

Candidate Gavin Short – Stanley Constituency



The “Long” Short Election Manifesto

I am offering myself as your representative for the forthcoming election. I am a Falkland Islander who has been with the Falklands in good times and in bad over 63 years. I am very much from a working-class background and will remain thus and my priorities are very much to ensure that our country and people can move ahead without those at the bottom end of the scale becoming further estranged from those at the top and also that our core population do not feel disenfranchised in their own country.

For those that don't know me, I was locally educated and what I have and what I am is testament to the teachers of the time and my love for and belief in our country and people. I still hold down two part time jobs as that helps to keep my batteries charged and my feet on the ground and fully intend, if re-elected, to keep them for as long as I can totter forward. Having a life outside of politics is important. Whilst not having much spare time, my great interest is Falklands history, especially the social history of our country. My other interests cover the politics and defence matters as it pertains to the Southern Cone and especially the Falklands.

I hold no interests or shares in any companies, nor do I own a business so am transparent (unencumbered) in my political decision making.

What has been achieved

Perhaps before looking ahead, we should look back. In these last four years some of the things that were brought over the line or tackled were

Covid: The opening up of the Falklands and tourist bounce back plus works at the Public Jetty to improve the tourist experience. Port: Contracts signed for the new port and causeway. KEMH roof replacement now approved. MPA road resurfaced. New wind turbines and battery banks on the way. New power station half over the line. Hips and knees replacement speeded up. FIDF veterans pin now a thing. EDS review underway.

These are but a few but there are many more some big, some smaller

Present economy

Our economy still remains in an enviable position (and our nearest neighbours do envy it and continually look for ways to undermine it). However we have now had some very large projects all come together at the same time which means that there is a lot less wriggle room than there used to be and my estimation is that this situation will remain as is for the next four to six years (that is predicated on everything staying in balance and a heavy downturn in income or indeed a welcome sudden increase in economic activity will move the dial in one direction or the other). Are we doomed? The answer is most definitely **NO**; we just need to be a little careful with our expenditure and must learn to say no and concentrate of the “must haves” and not the “nice to haves”. I am ancient enough to remember the not such good old days and we are a million miles from those times and I will do my utmost to make sure that we never go back there. That said, we must bear down on project costs and keep a tight rein on costs when projects are in progress.

Future economy

The Falklands economy has always been fragile, depending on only a couple of sectors and this very much remains the case and Government and the business community must strive to seek out desirable opportunities to widen our economic base so that the failure of one sector is not as economically impactful.

Rates and power charges

During this time of fiscal tightness there is going to be a push to increase rates and other charges and there are projects on the way such as the new turbines/power station and the new waste gobbling plant that if their depreciation is factored in to what we pay for our rates and electricity will bring big increases in what consumers will be expected to pay. **Not if I have my way**. Whilst I would be prepared to see some depreciation factored in (as is normal), the vast amount must be written off. That will be a political decision and one that I will not be afraid to take.

Electricity is expensive and it is a lever that FIG has in its control to affect the lives of its citizens. In the last Assembly I and a minority of other MLAs campaigned to have the debt recovery element of the electricity price spread over a longer period and thus reduce the cost per unit by 1 or 2 pence but were outvoted. It's not much - but to a family or pensioner (even a high usage business) it means a lot.

I dislike the term “user pays” intensely as it always seems to translate to “user pays 100%” – I would like to see the back of this horrible and outdated expression and replace it with “user contributes” which denotes more flexibility.

Development

A quick word for FIDC. Since its review, FIDC has been much nimbler and reactive to what is happening around it. Financing is an issue though as loan requests etc are getting bigger and I very much support the work that is ongoing between FIG/FIDC and overseas banks to open up a stream of capital for investment in the Falklands.

Hydrocarbons

The elephant in the room is hydrocarbons. Cards on the table: I am pro-oil. I would say that we are further down the road than we have ever been with this project but will it happen? That is a question that we would all like to know the answer to. We must not factor in any future income from a project that may never happen but if it does then it is going to change the face and finances of the Falklands. Even if it was announced tomorrow the big monies would not be seen for some years but those of you who remember the exploration campaign that took place some years ago will well recall the economic activity and income that was generated. We must continue to work to have everything in place in the way of laws and policies ready for it if it does happen and I know that FIG and its external advisors/consultants are going flat stick to make sure that we are ready. I have everything firmly crossed that all the hard work will not be in vain. Hydrocarbons, if it happens, will bring great income (eventually) it will bring great responsibility, it will bring political security and it will bring great opportunities for both the business sector and working person alike. It is going to mean changes, housing, population numbers etc but we have to grasp this opportunity – if it happens - and make it work for us for our benefit. I once said that we are only going to get one shot at this and we have to get it right and I haven't changed my mind.

One of the things that I would like to see this next Assembly do is to work up and consult on a sovereign wealth fund. If hydrocarbons do happen, it's too late for dinosaurs like me to really get much out of or involved in BUT it isn't about us. It's about future generations, the yet unborn Falkland Islanders. Hydrocarbons isn't going to last for ever (even if it happens at all) and whilst we do have a huge amount of infrastructure that requires fixing etc and social inequality issues that can be addressed, I do not want to see Assemblies going on a spending binge and we wake up thirty years down the road, hydrocarbons gone, the money gone, and probably with infrastructure and a population that we can't afford. We must plan NOW for those who will come after us and take a view on how we wish the Falklands to look in 30 to 40 years time and work our policies to achieve that.

If hydrocarbons happen, there will also be no shortage of people who will beat a path to our door either drawn by the dream of a luxurious lifestyle (a robust immigration system and policies will guard against this) or those who will present all sorts of splendid schemes, all designed to part us from our countries cash. We must not let this happen.

Salmon

There is a process underway which we must follow. I shall, if elected, carefully read the evidence gathered and make my decision based on that. Up till then, I am keeping an open mind.

Pensions etc

Pensions must at least keep pace with inflation as must other welfare payments. Whilst I have no issue with welfare being in place as we never know when hard times will visit us, for those who work, a dignified salary is a much better way to go.

Sport

Sport is an important part of Falklands life and I have always been behind the “big shed” sports facility and my support does not waver. Whilst it has benefits for the health of the nation it is nice once in a while to have something that brings happiness to people.

Housing

Housing is an issue. There is not enough of it, we seem not to have enough building companies and builders to keep up with demand. I would push for FIG to find the monies to keep on building social housing. Given financial constraints it would have to be at a slower rate. A new housing loop is underway and there is also infill sites within FIGs existing land plots in Stanley to allow both FIG and private owners to access land. Infill isn't everyone's cup of tea but needs must. I have to tip my hat to those companies in the private sector who are also building houses and flats. The more the merrier but at the moment supply and demand is not working and in some cases rents that are being charged are scary. I would like to see Assembly Members ask that work is done in earnest on looking at rent caps and further protections for tenants. This time enshrined in legislation and not left to best practice.

Immigration

Immigration is a touchy subject but I believe that we have reached the stage whereby parts on the present immigration system may not be fit for purpose. We have problems with housing and a cut to the amount of people who can apply for PRP each year and then go on to apply for FIG housing (and I don't blame them for doing that – I would do the same if I were in their shoes) whilst not being an immediate “fix” for the housing issues would start to take some of the strain off FIGs housing pool over time.

We all love the £1 a day and it is really important to those at the lower end of the pay scale (and that's most of us)/ pensioners or with a family - but at the last budget there was a push to halve the amount as a way of saving money. I was against it, as was a majority of then MLAs but you can bet that “suggestion” will be back again. Something that should be remembered is that as the pool of people who can apply gets bigger, the financial

commitment increases and unless there is an increase in income, it could become unaffordable. Immigration, feeds into this as well. It may be time for MLAs and the public to have an open and honest conversation as to the way forward and whether there needs to be an earnings cap put on the scheme (the rich don't need the £1 a day)

Telecoms

We have started the journey but as the old expression goes "freedom isn't free, someone has to pay for it". We did. The FIG are out to consultation to see what interest there is and about the way forward and whether that might be another single company offering core services or perhaps a private/government setup, remains to be seen. Telecoms are changing at great speed and I promise you that if elected I would not be in favour of entering into another agreement that binds us to a single provider and stifle self-provision/innovation and advances in technology and prices being brought down. Once bitten, twice shy.

Worker's protection Legislation

I pushed for the Workers Protection Ordinance to be looked at in the last Assembly. It made it to the Island plan and languished there – perhaps, in part, pushed aside by the Equalities work. This Ordinance has now gone beyond having some tweaks made and requires a complete re-write. I will push for that to happen as now, more than ever we need modern legislation covering workers protections and maternity/paternity leave plus sick pay and leave etc

HR processes

Job descriptions seem nowadays to be written in a way that is for the present incumbent and employers are looking for the perfect person and this can be off-putting to those who don't have the pieces of paper but who have bags of experience and could easily quickly adapt to a new role. More flexibility and clarity regarding possibilities for training etc is required in adverts. We need to continue to strive to have our own people in jobs. I also wonder whether having up to four-year work permits has removed some of the flexibility in the labour market and could come back to bite us. I would like to see this covered in a full review of the immigration system.

Protection of health and education

Health and education must remain protected areas as education means our youngsters taking more control of their own country (both private and FIG) and our health service whilst not being perfect is pretty darned good for a population of its size. Medical especially is under pressure from rising pharmaceutical costs plus the costs associated with us living longer (and as I enter that bracket, I am very much in favour of a splendidly long life). Population growth and immigration policies are also bringing pressures onto the medical service. I would fully support an across-the-board review to fully understand where the pressures are coming from and what actions we need to take to protect what we have for

our people. There will be pressure to start charging for prescriptions and whilst I have to declare an interest, I am not in favour of this. Health must be free from the cradle to the grave.

Environment and science

Our environment is important to us all. However, I feel that we must not allow ourselves to be pushed by pressure groups into actions that are against our ways of life and traditions without a full conversation with Falkland Islanders. They should be in harmony.

Furthermore, we fully need to understand the consequences of doing something and what the cost may be to the people of the Falklands before agreeing to anything. The collection of tins and cans is a case in point. We the rate payers are shelling out for this to happen but not a penny is received by FIG that can defray what we pay in rate costs. I also have to say that I am not in favour of seeing off everything that moves and taking us back to some 17th century situation. There has to be a nod to what was here historically and some of those animals have been here longer than we have.

Science is vitally important to understanding what is happening and SAERI are a world class organisation. From our fisheries through to wildlife, if we have to make decisions to protect what we have, then it must be science and Falklands based.

Fisheries

This is a volatile sector driven perhaps by factors out with our control but I do hope to see more science being done to understand what may be happening. This could be seen as investing in our future.

Something for the future

I do wonder whether we may have reached the size of population whereby some sort of building with a bowling alley and other pastimes which could be a bolt on to an existing business would now wash its face financially? May be something for the private sector to ponder and FIG could have a facilitatory role in in some way through FIDC.

Marina. FIDC are working on this and it is something that I would love to see here in Stanley for the economic activity that it would generate shoreside but again I see this as a private sector project with FIDC playing a facilitating role.

External relations and travel

I fully support even closer relations with both Chile and Uruguay with whom we already have ties to through families, trade and communications. Work is underway to see if a shipping link to the South of Chile can be re-established and that has my full support. The second flight remains a desire but for that to happen we require an airframe and the Argentines to step up to the agreement that they freely entered into and are now studiously avoiding. Whilst requiring buy in from our neighbours I would like to see us looking at closer countries (Chile and Uruguay) to see if something could be arranged with, for example, LATAM or Aerovias DAP. Whilst not what we really want it is an option to allow movement midweek.

Cards on the table. When it comes to Argentina, I have lived with this nation and its belligerent actions towards us for 63 years even to the point of being out with the FIDF on the night that they have invaded us. Whilst the noise levels go up and down from the coast, their intentions remain the same and they still look and work to stifle the Falklands and wreck our economy. Happily, they have failed. That said they are still a nuisance and through threats etc to other countries still control if we have a second airlink or not. They also go after sports teams from the Falklands and use their deceased as political pawns. I will not be giving an inch to them and would rather go hungry than cede one inch of our country to them.

Endex

These are some of my thoughts on issues that we have here in the Falklands. I am sure that there are many other issues big and small (but all important) that I have probably not covered. If elected I am ready to work with other MLAs to solve problems that we face but when it comes to the people of the Falklands and our future I will stand and fight against any proposed changes that are mooted that will widen pay and other economic inequality gaps or seek to move us closer to a neighbouring country that wishes to make us their colony.

We have an awesome little country; perfect it isn't but I do believe that by showing a bit of kindness and flexibility we can move our country forward in a way that is beneficial to us all.

If you fancy a yarn about anything then I can be contacted on 51075 or gavinshort1862@gmail.com